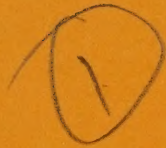


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Country Profile

Burkina Faso

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Country Profile

Burkina Faso

Canada



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Geography and climate

Known until recently as Upper Volta, Burkina Faso is an arid, landlocked country with an area of approximately 274,000 square kilometres - about one-quarter the size of Ontario. It is bounded to the north by Mali and Niger and to the south by the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo and Benin, giving the country a rectangular shape. The southern part of the country consists of wooded savanna which gives way to sandy, semi-arid land further to the north. In the south, the climate is of the Sudanic type, with precipitation ranging between 650 and 1,400 millimetres; in the north, the climate is of the Sahelian type, with precipitation of less than 650 millimetres.

The distribution of rain is not only unequal but also irregular. After several rainfalls, accompanied by short and violent tornadoes, the rains often stop for several weeks. The land then dries up and must be re-sown, often as many as four or five times. The soil is generally not very fertile. It is almost always lacking in depth, and the topsoil is often carried off by torrential rains. The compact soils have little water retention capacity. In fact, water control is one of the inhabitants' major concerns. Water is scarce except in the valleys and the marshes of the Gourma region. The most fertile soil is found in these same valleys, especially those of the Black Volta and Sourou rivers.

However, these regions are inhospitable to humans. The presence of parasites, such as the simulium black-fly - a carrier of onchocerciasis, which can cause blindness - or the tsetse fly, which causes malaria or sleeping sickness in humans and livestock, has always impeded settlement in these regions. Pest control programs presently under way in the valleys of the White Volta and Black Volta rivers should eventually make it possible to resettle over half a million people on more fertile land.

Burkina Faso is a relatively flat country. The centre consists of a vast lateritic plain having an average altitude of 300 metres, inclined toward the south in successive steps. On the periphery, the land is composed of several plateaus, traditionally called cliffs. In the north, the savanna gives way to steppe. In this region, desertification is steadily progressing and deforestation has reached alarming proportions.

The drought which plagued the Sahel in the early 1970s had devastating effects on Burkina Faso: famine once again ravaged its population, and more than one-third of its livestock herds perished. The situation stabilized to some extent in the mid-1970s, but since then harvests have been irregular and crop production has declined. Since the early 1980s, another more serious drought has been ravaging Burkina Faso, particularly the northern part of the country. In 1984, aridity virtually destroyed the crops of the Sahelian zone.

On the whole, the geographic situation of Burkina Faso is not an enviable one: the soils are poor, and the population density of 25 inhabitants per square kilometre is among the highest in Africa. The rainy season is relatively short, and agricultural yields are quite low. For these reasons, the country must import grain to meet its food requirements, even in good harvest years. Between 1975 and 1982, Burkina Faso's annual food deficit was approximately 100,000 tonnes, but regional disparities have made the situation even more critical in some parts of the country.

With a GNP of \$240 US per capita in 1982, Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries of Africa. The country has no known significant mineral resources. In the past decade, its industrial sector reached a high point of approximately 15 per cent of GNP. It is constantly plagued by foreign-trade and balance-of-payments deficits. The annual rate of inflation has remained at more than 9 per cent over the last ten years, eating away even more at the country's limited coffers. The main social indicators show a state of generalized poverty. The life expectancy of 44 years is the same as that of Chad, one of the lowest in the world; 36 per cent of the children die before the age of five. Close to 90 per cent of the population is illiterate. Health care is rudimentary and the country must combat endemic diseases: meningitis, measles, schistosomiasis and especially malaria.

Population

In 1983, the population of Burkina Faso was estimated at close to seven million, representing a population density of 25.1 inhabitants per square kilometre. The population is unevenly distributed: there are more than 80 inhabitants per square kilometre on the Mossi Plateau in the central part of the country, but fewer than 10 inhabitants per square kilometre in the northern and eastern areas, which are afflicted by chronic drought. The annual population growth rate is about 2.4 per cent. Ninety-five per cent of the population lives in some 7,224 villages in rural areas and consists primarily of subsistence farmers. People are one of the country's richest resources. The inhabitants of Burkina Faso have a reputation of being hard workers and warm, hospitable people.

The high population density and poor soils are responsible for the country's extensive migration, estimated at over 500,000 persons each year. The number of people from Burkina Faso living in other countries is estimated at more than 1.5 million. The main destinations of these emigrants are the Ivory Coast and other coastal countries, chiefly Mali, Niger and France. Economic problems are the main reason for the emigration. Most of the emigrants are young people, who leave the women, old people and children to work in the fields. In this sense, emigration impedes the country's agricultural development.

Burkina Faso is aptly described as an ethnic mosaic. The country has close to sixty ethnic groups of unequal size. However, two principal groupings may be distinguished: the Voltaic family and the Mande family. We should also mention the Hausa traders, the Peul herdsmen, the Tuareg and the Bella.

This ethnic mosaic has a relatively large number of languages and dialects. Each of the ethnic groups possess its own native language. French is the official language of Burkina Faso, but is spoken only by a minority. Moré, spoken by more than three million, and Diula, the language of commerce, are the two most commonly used languages.

History

The Mossi region is one of the oldest native kingdoms of West Africa. Its origin dates back to the 11th century and merges in oral tradition with a legend. According to this legend, a courageous young man saved the life of a

young princess. To reward this Mande warrior for his act of bravery, her father, the king, gave the young man his daughter's hand in marriage. They had a son name Ouadraogo who symbolized the Mossi nation, the product of a mutual interdependence between the native populations and the conquerors from east of Lake Chad. Through conquest after conquest, the Mossi became politically organized and built a true empire, forming alliances and setting up fiefs. The organization was so strict that it protected the Mossi from the late 16th century to the early 19th century and enabled them to live through the slave-trade era relatively unscathed. However, the end of the 18th century brought dynastic conflicts and internal quarrels. The formerly unified kingdom was divided into three principal political groups. The history of the inhabitants of western Burkina Faso, (Samo, Marka, Senufo), who were organized in autonomous territories, comprises a long succession of battles with their neighbours in an effort to preserve their independence.

The French invaded near the end of the 19th century. The kingdom of Ouagadougou fell in 1896 after long, bloody battles. Colonization followed, but not without resistance. In 1904, the country was made part of the territory of the Upper-Senegal-Niger colony. In 1919, the colony became a territory. A succession of revolts and repressions followed. This was a dark period in the history of the country. It was a time of forced labour: tens of thousands of persons were resettled either to work on the plantations of coastal countries, to assist in the construction of railroads and ports in these countries or to work in the mines of Niger. During the First World War, tens of thousands of men, especially Mossi, were recruited to fight in the French army as "Senegalese soldiers". Despite this contribution, the colony was divided up among the Ivory Coast, Mali and Niger in 1932 on the request of the French planters in a move to facilitate the shipment of labour to their coastal plantations. In 1946, the colonial power became more liberal, and forced labour was abolished. In 1947, Burkina Faso was reconstituted by France, which drew up its present borders on the basis of artificial administrative divisions. Upper Volta became a republic on December 11, 1958, gaining independence on August 5, 1960. Since then, the country has oscillated between civilian and military rule. In August 1983, the young Captain Thomas Sankara, following the example of Ghanaian Jerry Rawlings, seized power. Sankara represents the young progressive guard of the army. His coming into power coincided with the establishment of the National Revolutionary Council. At the same time, revolutionary defence committees began springing up across the country with the objective of mobilizing the masses. The new government advocates "a radical transformation of the present society" and stresses increased production and productivity. This revolution is supported by the young people (50 per cent of the population is under twenty-one years of age) and other groups, but it has also raised fears both within the country - in traditional circles and trade-union movements - and abroad: relations with France are ambiguous, and those with the Ivory Coast are characterized by mistrust.

Economy

According to the United Nations, Burkina Faso, whose economy is based almost entirely on agricultural production for local use, is among the ten least-developed countries. Its economic problems have a number of causes. First, its geographic location is not favourable to development: the port cities of

Abidjan, in the Ivory Coast and Lomé, in Togo, are more than 1,000 kilometres from Ouagadougou, which substantially increases transportation and energy costs and consequently, the export and import costs. Climatic conditions, depleted soil, persistent drought, a lack of natural resources, a limited domestic market and deteriorating terms of trade combine to thwart economic development. Chronic political instability (three regimes in three years) and heavy dependency on outside financing further reduce the possibilities of an economic takeoff. Finally, balance-of-trade, balance-of-payments and budget deficits make the country even more dependent on international assistance for its development.

Background of the Canadian aid program

The Canadian aid program began in the field of education, but has gradually been transformed into an economic assistance program, better suited to meet the pressing needs of this country. Canada's co-operation in Burkina Faso focusses on the stabilization of the plant cover, restoration of the food balance and energy development, and is complemented by the following support activities: the development of human resources, the establishment of village water-supply systems and the improvement of transportation systems. Canadian assistance is provided in the form of grants and includes bilateral co-operation (government to government), co-operation with NGOs, or non-governmental organizations, institutional co-operation and multilateral assistance. NGOs are particularly active at the community level. Institutional co-operation organizations - colleges, universities, professional associations and unions - work in the fields of education, training and health care. Between 1980 and 1983, Burkina Faso received \$28 million in bilateral aid, more than \$5 million of which was in the form of food aid. The country has received over \$70 million since the beginning of the program.

Key sectors of the economy

Agriculture

Burkina Faso is predominantly an agricultural country. However, the natural conditions are not particularly favourable for agriculture: the climate is severe and the rainy season is short. Moreover, the country's water reserves are low. Nevertheless, more than 90 per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture and livestock raising, which together represent approximately 44 per cent of domestic production. However, the harvests depend on climatic conditions, and since 1970 the country has been ravaged by serious and persistent droughts. This undoubtedly explains the increasing share of food products in total imports: more than 40 per cent. Agricultural production is naturally focussed on food crops, which account for nine-tenths of the land under cultivation. Grains are the primary food crop: millet, sorghum, maize and, to a lesser extent, rice. Root crops, yams and sweet potatoes are the primary staples of the people in the western and southwestern parts of the country, but are barely sufficient to meet local needs. Most of the population lives in the central part of the country, where the rains are light and irregular and the soil is poor. Agricultural yields are low: from

400 to 500 kilograms per person, in comparison to the African average of 920 kilograms per person. On the other hand, the southern and southeastern parts of the country have abundant rain and more fertile soil, but the inhospitable environment of its valleys and the low population density result in lower agricultural production. The people traditionally practice subsistence farming. Since 1981, production has declined as a result of irregular rainfall. More serious still are the problems of the distribution and transportation of food to the often isolated regions which suffer food deficits.

To assist Burkina Faso in its agricultural development efforts, Canada funded an important plant protection project (1979-1984 - \$5.7 million) aimed at eliminating insects which destroy food crops. The stabilization of the plant cover and restoration of the food balance, two of the three objectives given priority under the new Canadian aid program in the Sahel countries, will assist Burkina Faso in implementing its food strategy.

Export crops

The rural sector not only produces most of the food for local consumption, but also provides virtually all exports and a large part of the products processed locally. The most important export crop is cotton, the production of which has been steadily increasing. The production of sugar cane is rapidly increasing, but peanut production continues to decline. To encourage increased production of this crop, the government has raised the price of peanuts in the past few years. Shea nuts, a seasonal crop, are subject to strong cyclical influences. Since 1981-1982, the price of these nuts has been relatively high. Shea nuts are the country's third largest export, after cotton and livestock.

Livestock raising

Livestock raising is an essential economic activity, accounting for approximately 25 per cent of the country's exports. However, its development is seriously limited by the lack of water and pastures and by the many droughts. Close to one-third of the total herd perished in the drought which plagued the country in the mid-1970s. By the end of 1981, the herd had returned to the desired size. However, the drought of the past two years has again eliminated a part of the herd. Live animals account for the majority of livestock exported, despite the construction of slaughterhouses and refrigerated rooms. An extensive program funded by the World Bank and many donor countries comprises the improvement of the village water-supply systems and the creation of pasture zones and health stations to improve the quality of the herds.

Fisheries and forests

Fishing is carried out in the rivers, especially for local consumption. Catches yield around 6,000 tonnes whereas the annual consumption is 9,000 tonnes. The difference is imported from Mali. The completion of dam construction projects in the valleys of the Black Volta and White Volta will enable the country to double its catches.

The size of the forests, exploited almost exclusively as a source of energy, decreases from year to year. Deforestation and desertification claim hundreds of square kilometres of living space each year. In addition, over-exploitation poses a serious threat to the existence of this resource. The future of this sector is endangered since the reforestation begun in 1972 will make up for barely one-fifth of forest destruction.

Industry

The industrial sector is still at an embryonic stage, accounting for only 12 per cent of the GDP. Its expansion is impeded by the shortage of raw materials, high energy and transportation costs, a weak domestic market, the lack of qualified manpower, limited investment, competition from neighbouring countries and political instability. The two main types of industrial activity are the processing of such agricultural products as sugar, cotton and rice, which are sold on the domestic market or exported, and the production of goods to replace imports, such as soft drinks, beer, soaps and detergents, footwear and bicycles. Although the industrial sector counts several small private industries, the government plays a preponderant role in this sector through state-owned corporations. The most important project completed recently is the construction of a sugar refinery in Banfora. Projects currently under way include the construction of a nut-crushing plant and plants for manufacturing peanut paste, soaps, insecticides and canned meats.

Mining

At present, mineral production is limited to the exploitation of an antimony mine at Mafoulou and a marble quarry at Tiara. The gold mine at Poura has been re-opened and production, estimated at one tonne of gold annually, was to start up in September 1984.

The development of this sector poses two serious problems. Either there are insufficient resources at a single location to make production profitable - as in the case of antimony, copper or bauxite - or the deposits are large but so remote that transportation and energy costs make it uneconomical to exploit them - as in the case of the manganese deposits discovered at Tambao. The reserves at this mine are evaluated at more than 12 million tonnes. The ore is of high grade, with a manganese content of 51 per cent, one of the highest in the world. The project has been under study for several years. Even the existence of a limestone deposit at Tin Hrassan in close proximity does not make the project profitable. Construction of a 350-kilometre railway line will be required; this does not make the project very viable. Nevertheless, the government has funded the first branch of the line, linking Tambao and Ouagadougou.

Other deposits are presently under study, including bauxite deposits in the central part of the country and phosphate reserves which could exceed 250 million tonnes near Arly. The mining of these deposits, like that at Tambao, is difficult because of limited investment, the distance from the ocean, extraction costs and the depressed world price of these metals.

Energy

With the exception of firewood for domestic use, Burkina Faso is completely dependent on other countries for its energy supplies. Electric power is provided by thermal power stations fuelled by oil imported from the Société ivoirienne de raffinage in Abidjan, in which Burkina Faso holds an interest.

In response to rapidly rising oil prices, the government of Burkina Faso has intensified its efforts to develop its hydro-electric sector in co-operation with a number of donor countries. Even in this sector, the country is not in an enviable position.

In general, the country's bodies of water are not sufficiently large to produce the electricity required. The construction of a hydro-electric power station on the Kompienga in the eastern part of the country is about to begin. Feasibility studies of the construction of 60-MW stations at Numbiel and Bagré are also being conducted.

Transportation and communications

Since Burkina Faso is landlocked, transportation plays a key role in the country. The principal means of transportation is the Ouagadougou - Abidjan railway, which extends 520 kilometres into Burkina Faso. The railway plays an important economic role because it transports food products, imports and exports to and from the heart of Mossi country. Burkina Faso accounts for 45 per cent of the total traffic between Abidjan and Niger. CIDA is presently carrying out a project to provide technical assistance to the Abidjan-Niger railway company. In addition, it is conducting a \$14-million project, staggered over seven years, to improve the railway system by providing technical assistance and purchasing rolling stock.

The road system, one of the most concentrated in Africa, is generally poor. Despite major developments, such as the construction of the paved road to Niger and the road linking Ouagadougou to Lomé, less than 2,000 kilometres of a total of approximately 16,000 kilometres are open year-round. In order to assist Burkina Faso in the development of its road infrastructure, Canada has provided funds for the improvement and maintenance of 325 kilometres of road in the northern region of the country at a cost of \$14.9 million. Another project, currently under way, consists of improving 160 kilometres of roads in the southern region of Burkina Faso; it includes technical assistance and the funding of local costs.

With regard to communications, CIDA has provided \$2 million (1977-1984) in aid to the rural radio station in Bobo Dioulasso, the country's economic centre. The project comprises the establishment of a 5-kW radio transmission system and a programming schedule, the training of technicians and the provision of technical assistance.

Other fields of activity

Over the years, CIDA has developed flexible transfer and funding mechanisms that allow it to become involved in community sectors or to help the country in times of critical need. Through the staples funding project (\$2 million), CIDA was able to assist the country in importing essential products. Four million dollars has been committed to the execution of micro-projects by and for local populations between 1983 and 1986. Mission-administered funds have also been provided to assist the population in carrying out small community projects such as the establishment of training centres and dispensaries and the digging of village wells. Finally, CIDA is pursuing its initial training scholarship program (1981-1986 - \$2.7 million) in Burkina Faso, in other countries and in Canada.

Regional projects

CIDA is aware that many of the development problems faced by Burkina Faso are common to all Sahel countries and that a regional approach must be taken. Consequently, it has been carrying out a number of regional projects since the late 1970s. These include:

Task Force on Development - (1978-1983) - Phase II - \$2.9 million

Multidisciplinary operational team composed of Canadian specialists situated in the Sahel.

Institutional support for the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (ICDCS) - (1980-1983) - Phase II - \$1.5 million

Development of a regional strategy by Canadian and Sahelian experts.

Club du Sahel - (1980-1983) - \$250,000

Support mechanism for the activities of ICDCS and for the establishment of the Sahel development strategy.

PANAFTEL - (1975-1984) - \$8.089 million

Telecommunications system comprising the installation of eight sites, a training program and technical assistance.

Training of human resources - (1983-1986) - \$771,000

Technical assistance to the Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) to increase the quality and effectiveness of a training formula based on the real needs of the populations.

Canadian non-governmental organizations and institutional co-operation

Since the period of the terrible drought which plagued the Sahel in the 1970s, Canadian NGOs have focussed their activities for the entire region on

Burkina Faso. Their activities have increased, in terms of both the number of programs and projects implemented in various sectors and the number of local counterparts. In 1984-1985, Canadian NGOs will carry out projects involving over \$7 million in the areas of agriculture and integrated rural development, community development and health care services, village and rural water supply, training centres for young farmers and school equipment. CIDA's contribution to these projects is over \$3.5 million.

Volunteers from institutional co-operation organizations and development agencies - colleges, universities, unions, professional associations - are sent to improve food production in rural areas and to provide education and technical training in urban areas.

Multilateral aid

Canada also contributes to a number of regional and international organizations, such as the World Bank (\$50 million) and the International Monetary Fund, which assist Burkina Faso in its development efforts in co-operation with United Nations organizations. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has granted close to \$5 million for projects in the areas of rural development, silviculture and fisheries, natural resources, education and industrial development. In 1983-1984, Canada contributed \$59 million to the UNDP.

In the next two years, UNICEF will contribute close to \$4 million to projects in the areas of water supply, family planning, nutrition, health care, education and training. Canada's contribution to UNICEF in 1983-1984 was \$14.5 million.

In 1984, the World Health Organization received more than \$6.5 million from Canada for projects in the field of health, pest control, primary health care and nutrition.

CIDA and Burkina Faso in the 1980s

Burkina Faso, like its Sahelian neighbours, Mali and Niger, appears to have an uncertain future: its agricultural production, the mainstay of its economy, is threatened by drought, desertification and population pressures. When these three factors are combined, the result is often a food crisis which reaches alarming proportions, particularly in regions with food deficits.

The Sahel region has suffered three droughts in the past ten years. Therefore, it is not surprising that these countries are so impoverished and vulnerable. Although not without precedent, the current drought is the most serious of this century. Crops have been destroyed by aridity. Grazing conditions are poor and the herd threatened by disease. For the past ten years, the country has registered a food deficit of at least 100,000 tonnes a year in normal times.

Desertification, which is attributable to man, poses an equally serious threat to the country. For thousands of years, man has made reasonably good use of the natural capacity of these regions to support life. Today, however, the traditional harmony has been destroyed. Overly high population growth has upset the socio-ecological balance. For all practical purposes, at an annual population growth rate of 2.5 per cent, as in the case of Burkina Faso, the population doubles every forty years. The population growth is at the root of three factors which result in desertification: overfarming, overgrazing and deforestation. More and more land is being brought under cultivation, but the soil becomes depleted and the yields decline. The number of head of cattle is increasing, whereas the land reserved for grazing is constantly diminishing. Finally, wood accounts for more than 90 per cent of the energy consumed in Burkina Faso, since it is the only fuel that the population can afford. Wood is indispensable for cooking and heating at night, which is necessary in desert regions. However, the use of wood results in increased deforestation, despite the natural capacity of forests to regenerate themselves. Burkina Faso does not appear to be well equipped to reverse the deterioration of its environment. For the time being, Canada has set up an emergency fund of \$65 million to assist Burkina Faso and its Sahelian neighbours to combat drought and famine. The Canadian aid program also recognizes Burkina Faso's development problems. Consequently, its primary objective is the establishment of a socio-ecological balance which will enable the country to implement its development strategy. To this end, the Canadian aid program focusses on three areas: stabilization of plant cover, restoration of the food balance and energy development.

Prospects

The high population density on exhausted and often eroded soil, decreasing food production, irregular rainfall, a lack of natural resources, vast migrations of young people, and chronic balance-of-trade deficit combine to thwart the economic development of Burkina Faso. It is not surprising that the country relies so heavily on outside bilateral and multilateral aid to ensure not only its development, but its very survival. From 1979 to 1982, Burkina Faso received an average of \$208 million each year. As with many West African countries, this outside assistance is essential to the country's financial stability. Most of the aid is concentrated on agriculture and rural development and the improvement of transportation, energy and communications infrastructures. The principal donor countries are France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Canada, the United States, the European Economic Community and United Nations aid agencies.

Despite its precarious development situation, Burkina Faso still has agricultural potential, since only one-third of its arable land is under cultivation. Pest control programs in the valleys of the Volta River will enable the country to recover richer soil in zones where precipitation is higher. The objective of the present government is to achieve food self-sufficiency. Agricultural development is perceived as a priority and the driving force of development. Particular attention is given to village water-supply systems.

The government intends to reach its objective of providing for a daily consumption of 20 to 30 litres of drinking water per person in the rural regions by 1990. The government also plans to develop local agri-food industries as an indispensable support to agriculture. The development of a food production strategy and village water-supply policy and the support of donor countries should make it possible for the local populations to improve their standard of living over the next few years.

Profile

Official name	Burkina Faso
Capital	Ouagadougou
Official language	French
Other languages spoken	Moré, Diula
Ethnic groups	Mossi, Gurma, Yarse, Grunshis, Samo, Marka, Busani, Peuls, Tuareg, Bella
Religions	Animism, Islam, Christianity
Date of independence	August 8, 1960
Principal trading partners	Ivory Coast, France, Italy, Great Britain, Togo, United States, Federal Republic of Germany

Comparative data

	<u>Burkina Faso</u>	<u>Canada</u>
Area	274,000 km ²	9,976,000 km ²
Population (1982)	6,738,000	24,300,000
Population density	25.6 persons/km ²	2.5 persons/km ²
Population growth (1970-1982)	2.0%	1.2%
Life expectancy at birth	44 years	75 years
Infant mortality (1982)	157 per 1,000 live births	10 per 1,000 live births
Daily per capita caloric intake as percentage of requirement	95	126
Adult literacy	7%	99%
Percentage of population with primary school education (1981)		
total	20%	106%
boys	26%	106%
girls	15%	104%

	<u>Burkina Faso</u>	<u>Canada</u>
Percentage of labour force employed in (1980):		
agriculture	82%	5%
industry	13%	29%
services	5%	66%
GNP per capita (1982)	\$210 US	\$11,320 CAN
Average annual growth of GNP (1960-1982)	1.1%	3.1%
Average rate of inflation (1970-1982)	9.7%	9.3%

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